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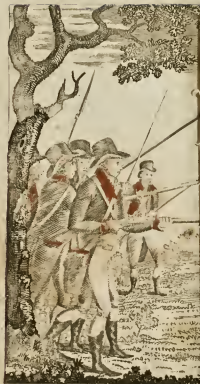
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AN
AFFECTING NARRATIVE
OF THE
Captivity & Sufferings
OF MRS.

MARY SMITH,

Who, with her HUSBAND and three DAUGHTERS,
were taken Prisoners by the INDIANS in Au-
gust last (1814) and after enduring the most
cruel hardships and torture of mind for *sixty*
days (in which time she witnessed the trag-
ical death of her Husband and helpless
Children) was fortunately rescued
from the merciless hands of the
Savages by a detached party from
the army of the brave

General JACKSON,

now commanding at New Orleans.

As the preceding pages will be found to
contain a particular account of the engagement
between the handful of JACKSON's brave boys,
and the party of Savages, above alluded to
the reader may judge of what materials
the hardy sons of Tennessee and Ohio
are composed.

PROVIDENCE, (R.I.) Printed for L. Scott.

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CAPTIVITY & SUFFERINGS
OF
Mrs. Mary Smith, &c.

[Communicated from a gentleman in the Western Country to his friend in Rhode Island.]

“ THE intrepid and brave Gen. JACKSON, with the troops under his command, having so completely effected his object the last season, in so far exterminating the Indians of the Creek Nations as to compel the surviving few to sue for a peace—it was conceived advisable by the General, to station a few regiments in their neighborhood, to hold them in awe, in case an enemy should attempt to instigate them to a recommencement of hostilities—in the interim, the commander was apprized of the incursions of wandering hordes of the Kickapoo nation of Indians, who had committed many depredations on the white inhabitants residing within and near the Floridas.—A detachment from a Tennessee regiment, consisting of a lieutenant, sergeant and thirty-two privates, were ordered on an expedition, not only for the protection of the defenceless inhabitants, but with orders to pursue and attack the enemy with fire and sword wherever found, unless their great superiority in numbers, should render the step

imprudent.—This little but brave handful of men quit the main body of the army on the morning of the third of September, and on the fourth crossed the Yazoo, and scoured the thickets bordering upon the Mississippi—not meeting with any but friendly Indians in this quarter, they bent their course further west, and after penetrating the wildest part of the country to a considerable distance, they on the 24th fell in with a small party of the Choctaws, with whom they had recently been at war, but were then at peace—by these Indians they were informed that they had the day previous fallen in with a large body of the Kickapoos, and run-away Chickasaws, to the number (as they judged) of an hundred, and that they had with them some white prisoners, and a great number of scalps !—Lieut. Brown collecting all the information possible relative to the probable course the enemy had taken, pushed forward with all possible expedition, and on the day following about sun-set fell in with their trail, and by the fires which they in the course of the night discovered, concluded that the enemy had encamped not far ahead—at the dawn of day the Lieutenant dispatched two of the most active of his men, to make an observation as to the number and situation of the Indians—the men were absent about three hours when they returned with the information that they had discovered the enemy encamped in a swamp, a few miles therefrom, that their number exceeded one hundred and were armed principally with bows and

arrows, tomahawks and spears—that they perceived three or four whites lying bound in their centre, one of whom appeared to be a female!—these observations were made without any discovery on the part of the enemy.

A consultation was now held among the officers and privates, whether it would be prudent to risque an action with a force so much superior to their own, their probably being four to one!—but the idea of rescuing from the merciless hands of their enemies their unfortunate countrymen, who, probably were designed as victims to feed their savage fires, inspired the lieutenant and his little band with unconquerable resolution—not one expressed a doubt of their success, but the whole company, to a man, begged to be led on to the unequal combat!—The commander placing the utmost confidence in his men, whom he knew were well skilled in the Indian mode of bush fighting, did not hesitate to devise a plan of attack that would most probably insure, at least, the release of the unfortunate captives—he divided his company into four separate parties—the sergeant with ten men, were designed to gain the enemy's rear—two parties of six men each were to flank them on the right and left, while the lieutenant with the remainder of the company were to charge them in front—each party were directed to gain their stations unperceived by the enemy, if possible, and having them thus encompassed, the charge of those in front was to be the signal for the other parties to

rush on and to pour in a well directed fire upon the enemy. A plan being thus devised, each party hastened to their respective stations—the lieutenant with his little band of invincibles, were soon within gun shot of the savages, by whom being at this instant discovered, the latter threw themselves into Indian file, and with a yell, peculiar to the savage race, rushed upon their assailants, at whom they hurled their tomahawks and discharged a shower of arrows!—at this important crisis, Lieut. Brown ordered his little company to charge, which being the signal for a general attack, the detached parties rushed upon the enemy with such impetuosity, in the mean time shouting and discharging their pieces with so good effect, that the latter were soon thrown into disorder and became panic struck!—imagining their assailants (by whom they were now completely surrounded) more numerous than themselves, they made no further resistance, but throwing aside their packs, blankets, and even their weapons, attempted each to save himself by flight—but this unexpected opportunity of revenge did not pass unimproved by the lieutenant's brave lads—not having sufficient time to reload their muskets, they assailed the enemy with their own weapons, destroying numbers with the spears and tomahawks which the savages had so recently possessed!—In less than half an hour from the commencement of this bloody action the conquering assailants completed their work! as probably at this time not one unconquered sav-

age remained within two miles of the scene of action. At the conclusion of the fight the unfortunate captives were sought for, whom they found four in number (one a female) bound hand and foot with green withes!—these, together with the captured Indians, Lieut. B. succeeded in conveying in safety to this place. Thus did this inferior number of the brave and hardy sons of the western world, achieve more in the short space of three weeks, than what perhaps five times their number of regular troops would have done in a whole campaign!—they attacked an enemy in the heart of their own country, and of four times their number (the principal of whom were old warriors or fighting-men) of whom fifty-two were slain, twelve made prisoners, and a great part of the residue in all probability mortally wounded, and four unfortunate captives liberated—and all this effected without the loss of a single man on their part, and but four slightly wounded!—such appears to have been the fruits of the expedition.

With the unfortunate captives I have conversed severally—the poor female appears to have been peculiarly unfortunate—by these ferocious cannibals she has been within the last eight weeks deprived of her husband and three lovely children, and that too in a manner almost too shocking to relate—her story (which I shall attempt to repeat as I received it from her own lips) is such as cannot fail to touch the heart of one not callous to the feelings of humanity.

The name of the late husband of this unfortunate woman was RICHARD SMITH, who with his family (consisting of himself, wife, three children and a negro lad) resided at the extreme part of a small township 135 miles west of the Natchez and at the distance of twelve miles from any other white family—being thus situated, they were not without their apprehensions of being at some unexpected moment surprized by the hostile Indians, who had been frequently observed skulking about in the woods within a few miles of their dwelling;—they remained however unmolested until the night of the first of August last, when Mr. Smith it appears, was alarmed by the barking of his dog—he rose from his bed and looked from his chamber window, but saw no person, and all appeared to be quiet—he again returned to his bed, but not many minutes after he was once more disturbed by a loud and repeated knocking at the door—the whole family now became greatly alarmed, and repaired to the chamber of Mr. Smith, who hailed from the window, and demanded who was there—but received no other answer, than if he did not immediately open his doors, he should be murdered! He was soon convinced that a party of Indians surrounded his house, and suspecting that their designs were hostile he armed himself, and ordered the remainder of the family to prepare to defend themselves in the best manner they could—accordingly Mr. S. with his wife and negro equipped themselves with a loaded musk-

et each, and the two oldest girls with each a hatchet. Being thus prepared, Mr. Smith hailed once more from the window, and with the most horrible threats he was ordered to open his doors, which he peremptorily refused—he shut his window and prepared for the worst. In a few moments the doors were forced and the hellish tribe rushed in, and were saluted with the three muskets, which caused them to retreat, and gave the brave defenders time to reload; immediately after they again returned and attacked the negro, whom they soon dispatched with their tomahawks—Mr. S. and his wife again discharged their pieces and then with their daughters retreated to an inner chamber, the door of which they bolted—here the unfortunate family did not remain long secure, for before they had sufficient time to reload, the savages succeeded in forcing the door, and with uplifted tomahawks and a hideous yell, rushed into the room!—all further resistance now on the part of the assailed, was vain—Mr. S. receiving a severe blow upon the head from an Indian with his tomahawk, fell senseless to the floor!—Mrs. S. observing herself and children surrounded by those savage monsters, frightfully painted, and who with their tomahawks and scalping-knives menaced them with instant death—begged for mercy—but, alas, her intreaties were in vain!—they were dragged almost naked out of the house and bound severally with cords.

By order of one of the savages, who appeared to

be a chief, about twenty of their gang took charge of the unhappy prisoners, and by whom they were to be conducted to their settlement (about 100 miles distant) without delay—while the remainder were left to pillage and fire the house. They commenced their journey about two in the morning, avoiding the main road, they travelled through an uncultivated wilderness, at the rate of nearly six miles an hour. If either of the prisoners through fatigue slackened their pace, they were most inhumanly beat and threatened with instant death.

After a tedious travel of nearly 30 miles, the savages halted in a swamp—here for the first time, from the time of their departure, the prisoners were permitted to sit down—the Indians kindled a fire on which they broiled some bear's flesh, but of which they allowed the unfortunate captives but a small portion. After refreshing themselves and extinguishing their fire, they recommenced their journey and travelled until sun-set, when the Indians again halted, and began to prepare some covering for the night. The unfortunate children complained much of their feet being swollen—contrary to their expectations, however, they had a tolerable night's rest, and on the succeeding day, though nearly naked and half starved, travelled with much more ease than on the preceding one. The Savages occasionally allowing them a little half roasted bear's flesh, sufficient only to keep them alive!—they this day travelled, according to the reckoning of the Indians,

nearly 40 miles, and were about sun-set joined by the remaining Savages who were left behind—they were loaded with the spoils of Mr. Smith's property, among which, unfortunately for the captives, was a small keg of whiskey, of which drinking until they became intoxicated, they diverted themselves in torturing their unhappy prisoners in every way that savage brutality could devise. Mr. Smith having lost so large a quantity of blood in consequence of the severe wound that he had received at his house, and now receiving additional bruises and lacerations, became so weak, that on the morning ensuing he was found unable to support himself on his legs—the Savages imputing his inability to willfulness, renewed their acts of barbarity to effect a compulsion—they severally beat him with clubs, cut and gashed his flesh with their knives, and scorched his naked body with brands of fire!—Finding, however, that their hellish proceedings had no other effect than to render the poor unhappy sufferer less enabled to travel, they formed the horrid conclusion of putting him to a painful death; and in order to execute the infernal purpose, they stripped and prostrated the wretched victim on his naked back, they then cut holes through his wrists and ankles, between the bones and tendons, in such a manner as to draw green withes through the apertures!—then extending his arms and legs to a degree exquisitely painful, they, with the ligatures above mentioned, lashed him fast to four small trees,

about six feet from the ground ; which bloody exploit finished, those horrid hell hounds left for a few moments the writhing sacrifice, with an intent to make merry, and enjoy in idea, the excruciating tortures of the sufferer !

In about half an hour they returned and commenced an Indian dance, and pow-wow, around the distressed victim--this they continued to do about an hour, when, becoming weary of such severe exercise, a strip of bark was placed within a few inches of Mr. Smith's head, as a mark, and at which his cruel tormentors now in succession hurled their tomahawks ! --at length, either by accident or design, one of those deadly weapons struck the head of their expiring victim, and fortunately put an immediate end to his existence ! To this horrid spectacle Mrs. Smith and her unfortunate children were compelled to stand witnesses - unable to render their wretched husband and parent any assistance !

The merciless cannibals having sufficiently feasted themselves with a view of the mangled body of the deceased (of which having deprived of its scalp) they again re-assumed their journey toward their settlement, in view of which they encamped that night. At day-light next morning, they gave their prisoners new clothes, painted their faces with various colors, and put into their hands white staffs, tassaled round with the tails of deer--this being done, the Savages commenced a dismal yell ! in a few moments after they were joined by a great num-

ber of Indians and squaws from the village, to which the unhappy prisoners were now conveyed--- they were led in great triumph to the cabin of their principal chief, where they were given to understand their fate was to be determined.

The chiefs of the tribe, after a consultation of an hour or two, conceived it most advisable to put the prisoners to death ! as the captors it appeared had disagreed about whose property they should be, as they had jointly seized them ; and, to terminate the dispute, agreeably to the abominable usage of the Savages, it was determined by the chiefs of the party, that the prisoners, who gave rise to the contention, should be destroyed ; and that their captors should be the principle agents in the execrable business ! By them it was resolved that the unhappy girls should immediately suffer, while the death of the mother should be deferred until some future day.

No sooner was the determination of the chiefs made known, than the whole village set up the death cry, and began to make preparations for an event the most tragical ere recorded in history. Three saplings were pruned clear of branches up to the very top around them ; while this was doing, two or three of the Indians employed themselves in splitting pitch pine billets into small splinters about five inches in length, and as small as one's little finger, sharpening one end, and dipping the other in melted turpentine,

At length, with countenances distorted by infernal fury, and with hideous yells, two or three of the Savages leaped into the midst of their circle, and dragged those ill fated females (the oldest in her 19th and the youngest in the 11th year of their age) shrieking from the embraces of their helpless mother! These furies assisted by their comrades, stripped the forlorn girls, already convulsed with apprehensions, and tied each to a sapling, with their hands as high extended above their heads as possible; and then, horrid to relate, pitched them from their knees to their shoulders, with upwards of six hundred of the sharpened splinters above described, which, at every puncture, were attended with screams of distress that echoed and re echoed through the wilderness! And then, to complete the infernal tragedy, the splinters, all standing erect on the bleeding victims, were every one set on fire, which must have exhibited a scene of monstrous misery, beyond the power of speech to describe, or even the imagination to conceive. It was not until near three hours had elapsed from the commencement of their torments, and that they had lost almost every resemblance of the human form, that these helpless virgins sunk down in the arms of their deliverer, Death:

What could have been the sensations of the poor distressed mother, at witnessing the horrid sacrifice of her tender offspring, I shall not attempt to say: they were unquestionably such as would be impos-

sible for me, or any other person to describe with correctness ! Let it suffice to say, that she in a fit of distraction, during the tragic scene, broke in twain the withes with which she was bound, and plunged headlong into the flames that were then devouring her dear children ! !

She was insensibly drawn from the fire and conveyed to an Indian hut, where she remained in a state of delirium, for two or three days --when she had a little recovered she was given to understand by an Indian (who spoke a little broken English) that the hut which she occupied, belonged to one of their chiefs, who, with four other Indians, were shot in the late attack upon her husband's house. The wretched captive now expected every moment to receive a summons to prepare herself for a fate as horrible as that of her friends ! she remained however unmolested for nearly a week ; when, two aged squaws came to the hut, and made signs to her to follow them, which she did, to the distance of nearly a mile, to a cleared spot of land, where were collected two or three hundred Indians, squaws and children ;—Mrs. Smith was now addressed by one who appeared to be a chief, and informed of the number of his tribe that had been slain, whose friends (said he) cry for vengeance, and that she was then to suffer torments !—the most hideous yells echoed through the woods—a large fire was kindled, and over it they placed a kind of gallows, on which the captive was made to understand, she

was to be hung. Two large and fierce looking Indians bound her, and with savage ferocity, she was stripped and dragged towards the fire : a ring was first formed by the children, a second by the women, and a third by the men round the wretched victim ; they then commenced the death song running back and forth round the flames—after continuing this for near an hour, one of the savages approached the prisoner, and when about to commit her to the devouring element, their attention was suddenly attracted by the harrangue of an old Indian apparently a chief, at the conclusion of which the prisoner was unbound and by the two old squaws conveyed back to the hut, where she had been recently confined.—Here she had not remained long before the old Indian, by whose means her life had been preserved, entered, attended by an interpreter, and by whom she was informed that through the intercession of the old chief, her life had been spared—his power was absolute, and he had concluded to adopt her to supply the place of his squaw, who with his two children, had been killed by the whites in one of their former expeditions—the prisoner was now informed that it was left to her choice, whether she would accede to the proposals of the old chief, or would rather resign herself up a victim to savage barbarity.

Here I cannot better describe the feelings of Mrs. Smith, on this trying occasion, than to make use of her own words—they are these :—" I now pray-

ed for death;—I heartily wished to be delivered from such merciless cannibals;—but just escaped from torture, I was reduced to the necessity of becoming a prostitute in order to prevent the most cruel death, but I had but little time to reflect, and that must be employed faithfully—to resign myself as a victim to the barbarity of the Savages, was a dreadful thought, and to gratify the wishes of one of those vile monsters, was as I conceived although shocking in the extreme, not quite so bad as to endure their savage torture—of the two impending evils, I was therefore induced to choose the less—I gave the old sachem to understand that I would cheerfully comply and was conducted immediately to his wigwam—here I affected great regard for his person, but as I feigned great indisposition, begged of him to suffer me to remain in the situation I then was, until I should in some measure recover my health and spirits, to which, contrary to my expectations, he acceded.

I began now to contemplate seriously upon my disagreeable situation, when the thought arose in my mind, that by killing this Indian I might possibly effect my escape; the hut wherein I dwelt was entirely deserted by all other Indians than its owner, therefore my chance was good—I accordingly provided myself with an old scapring knife, which I found in the hut, and which I secreted beneath a quantity of moss, which served me for a bed—the night succeeding, the old Indian having pro-

trated himself upon a mattress, nearby me, soon fell asleep;—I thought this to be the time to effect what I had premeditated, accordingly I took my knife and creeping with as little noise as possible to where the savage lay, plunged it into his bosom!—he attempted to rise, but I at that instant snatching his tomahawk from his belt, gave him a severe blow on the head, which I repeated until I was sure he was dead!

I now hastily collected all the victuals that the hut contained, and left the lonesome place. Nothing was to be heard but the wild beasts, which very much daunted me. I however ventured to proceed, and steered a north easterly direction;—every shake of a leaf startled me, thinking my enemies were in pursuit. I travelled on through brooks, briars and woods, as fast as my feeble legs would carry me till morning, when I conceived it more prudent to climb some tree and conceal myself in its top, than to travel—while I was thus pondering, I heard a dreadful yelling at a distance, which appeared to be in the same course that I had been travelling;—I was so frightened that I knew not what measure to take, at least I resolved to climb a tree near by which I effected with considerable difficulty. I had not been long in this situation before I descried twenty or thirty frightful looking Indians, who passed within a few rods of the tree which I had ascended! I recognised some of my old tormentors among them, they steered a course about west as I

judged: I kept upon the tree during the day and at night descended and continued my journey; my provisions being nearly exhausted, I thought it time to look out for a new supply—in searching among the bushes I found a number of red berries, very luscious to the taste, I picked I conjecture three quarts, and pursued my journey—I had not proceeded far however before my ears were again assailed by the dreadful howlings of the wild beasts, which continued till morning; several bears approached me near enough, to distinguish their horrid forms; and some wild cats appeared also in sight, which, perhaps, magnified by my fears, appeared of a most enormous size, nay, there was one of them that advanced nearer to me than any of the rest, but upon my setting up a loud cry, he retreated after having sent forth a most horrid yell, which was echoed back by all the other beasts of the forest.

To avoid these nocturnal enemies (which were as much to be dreaded as the Savage) I now resolved to travel only by day. After the fear and fatigue of the night, I could not think of setting forward, before I had taken some repose, which I stood in great need of; and, at last ventured to stretch myself down beneath the thick branches of an oak; but the agitations of my mind prevented me from any perfect enjoyment of that blessing, and I slumbered rather than slept till noon.

I then took a slight repast, which consumed the

remainder of my provision and began my journey, tending easterly, in hopes of reaching some christian settlement, or falling in with some friendly Indians, who would conduct me thereto. The meeting with the hostile Savages, was the worst I had apprehended, but I now began to think that a sudden death would be preferable to the state I was then in, passing from one misfortune to another, and exposed to the perishing with hunger, or supplying the wild beasts of the forest with meals to assuage theirs.

My weakness did not suffer me to go far this day, my journey being only about three hours slow pace ; I took care to halt before my strength was quite exhausted ; the terrors of the night preceding warned me to prepare a safe retreat for the night from the voracious animals of the wilderness.—Fear was the first principle of my action, which must have been very powerful in me, when it was superior to the pressing calls of hunger—having selected a tree of easy ascent, on which I had concluded to pass the night, I began to look about for food of any kind ; but the place where I then was as well as all that I had passed through, was completely barren of all sorts of nourishment : there was neither roots nor vegetables fit for eating, to be found.

As soon as the night fell I retired with a heavy heart to what I conceived a safe retreat for the night—the wild beasts did not cause me any alarm until about midnight, when I might well imagine, from

the horrid din that assailed my ears, that all the savage beasts throughout the deserts of this new world, had been gathered together, to terrify me with their howlings !

The welcome morn' at length arrived, and, by driving the beasts back to their dens, relieved my alarms, which had for the night suspended the cruel sensations of hunger—but as soon as my fears began to abate, these began to operate to a severe degree. Thus was I apparently fated to sustain alternately, the most bitter ills of life, hunger and fear ! But the necessity of food, under an impossibility of procuring it, is certainly the greatest of them.

I descended from the tree and prepared to pursue my uncertain journey, in hopes of being able to meet with some sort of aliment, in my way, to recruit my sinking spirits ; I made trials of every species of plant, root, or vegetable, I could pick up, but with little success there was neither favour nor nourishment in them. My hunger increased every moment, but the hope of being able to assuage it sustained me every step, and enabled me to travel on till afternoon—when I arrived at a piece of rising ground, where I expected to have a view of some fruitful spot, or hospitable village ; but all was as dreary as before – nothing was to be discovered but a thick and gloomy forest, as far as the eye could reach !—such an horrid prospect threw me into the most shocking state of despair ; I was

now almost resolved to give up the idea of pursuing any farther my fruitless route, in which I could not possibly foresee any end to my wants and miseries, except what I might have received upon the spot where I then was, from death alone.

However, as the day began to draw to a close, I had yet sufficient strength left me to seek my usual place of safety for the night, during which I had little repose, as the continual howlings of the wolves, and other beasts, prevented it.—The morning ensuing I once more set forward, but with as little prospect of meeting with any succour as on the days preceding;—a thick wood that I met with in my course, I found it almost impracticable to pass through, on account of the strong reeds and briars it was choaked up with, which tore my feet and hands in a shocking manner—but fortunately for me, kind Providence seemed willing to reward me, at length, for the pains that I had taken to penetrate a forest, so gloomy and uninviting—in the course of my travel this day, when hunger had driven me almost to the last extremity, I had the good fortune to discover a wild turkey's nest, containing thirteen eggs! With what a transport of joy did I view this welcomed prize! which to me at that moment was far more acceptable than what would have been their bulk in gold!—such indeed was my hunger at the moment, that I had devoured nearly one half of them, before I gave myself time to reflect that in my then weak bodily state, hav-

ing been for so great a length of time without food, I ought to have eaten sparingly. Having secured the remainder of the eggs in a corner of my apron, and feeling much recruited by the unexpected repast, I again set forward with the fond expectation of reaching some friendly settlement, before I should be again compelled to endure the pains of hunger !

But, alas ! how true is it that when we, poor unhappy mortals, conceive ourselves almost within the reach of the object of our pursuit, are unexpectedly precipitated into a state of inconceivable sorrow and disappointment !—such indeed proved the result of my endeavours to reach some hospitable mansion, where I should not only be secure from the further annoyance of the Savages, and wild beasts of the forest, but should probably obtain something to satisfy the cravings of nature. Toward the close of the day I had descended a valley to seek a shelter for the night, when I was aroused by the sound of some shrill voices, which seemed to proceed from a distance—as I conceived myself now not far from some christian settlement, I concluded they were the voices of some friendly persons whom the kind hand of providence had selected to extricate me from the difficulties which attended me ;—whether they be friends or foes (thought I) I will meet them—for I began to conceive it impossible for man to render my situation worse than it then was. To prevent being passed unnoticed, I hallooed as loud

as the weak state of my lungs would permit me— I soon discovered that I had not only been heard by these people by their answering, but I soon perceived by the rustling of the leaves that they were approaching the very spot where I stood! The bushes which surrounded me were so extremely thick as to conceal them from my view, until within a few yards of me—when, to my inexpressible horror, I perceived them to be Savages, and of the very nation from which I had so recently escaped!—thus were all my expectations of a speedy relief, in a moment blasted!

They made me their prisoner, and as their number exceeded one hundred, and had with them a number of human scalps, and three young men, prisoners, I had no doubt but that they were on their return from an expedition against some of the white settlements. They bound me in the manner they had the other unfortunate captives, and weak and emaciated as I was forced me to keep their pace for three days, when I was fortunately rescued from their merciless hands by Lieut. Brown, and his brave little company of soldiers!"





